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ABSTRACT

This paper is the last in a series of 14 detailing the procedures involved in setting up an interdisciplinary project that explores the similarities and dissimilarities in the response to literature in readers from different countries. It marks the end of the preparatory work for the "Folktale-project." The first section is an overview of the folktale project from its inception to the main data collection. The second section is a presentation of the basic assumptions that had to be set up as indisputable points, simply in order to carry out the study in the time allotted and with the resources available--over a decade. It reviews reasons behind the choice of literary material, the length of that material, the cultural imprint of that material, and the languages in which that material appeared. The third section briefly cites the procedures in the final data collection as well as the number of questionnaires completed. Contains an appendix of research material. (TB)

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FOLKTALE:
A CROSS-CULTURAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LITERATURE

Paper 14

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FOLKTALE:

A CROSS-CULTURAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY
OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LITERATURE

Paper 14

THE CONSTRUCTION (summary) AND THE COLLECTION (LAST PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FOLKTALE-PROJECT)

AUTHORS: Cay Dollerup, Peter Florentsen, Iven Reventlow, Carsten Rosenberg Hansen

Drafts: 1992, 1993, 1994 Finalised: 1 March 1995

A Work from The Research Unit for Experimental Studies in Reader Response.

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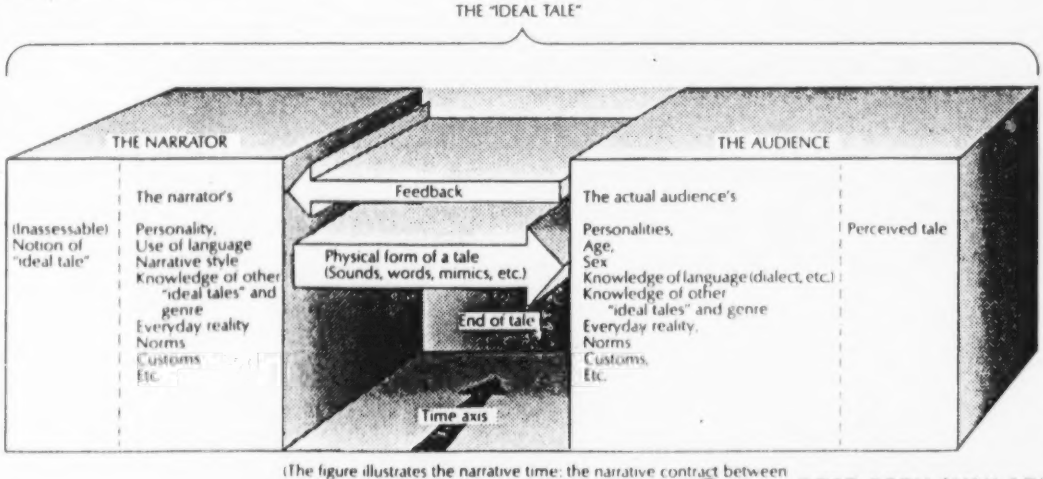

(The figure illustrates the narrative time: the narrative contract between narrator and audience and which is limited in time.)

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Paper 14, "Folktale"

FOLKTALE: A CROSS-CULTURAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LITERATURE

Title: Winding up the construction and collection

Authors: Cay Dollerup, Peter Florentsen, Iven Reventlow, Carsten Rosenberg Hansen

Abstract

The present paper is the last one in the series of 14 papers describing the construction and execution of the 'Folktale' project. It briefly summarises our procedures and gives the number of questionnaires completed by readers. It will be the last progress report about the project to be published in this form. We expect subsequent publications in articles and books, which refer to the series of progress reports.

ISBN 87-89065-36-0

INTRODUCTION

The present paper will be the last one in which we describe the setting up of the 'Folktale-project'.

Since the paper will mark the end of our preparatory work it is divided into three parts.

The first part is an overview of the "Folktale-project" from its inception to the main data collection. The second is a presentation of the "basic assumptions" that we have had to set up as indisputable points, simply in order to carry out the study in the time and with the resources at our disposal - over a decade. The third part briefly cites the procedures in the final data collection as well as the number of questionnaires completed.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF 'FOLKTALE'

Background

"Folktale: a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary study of the experience of literature" was the logical international capstone of a series of reader response studies which we have conducted by methods from criticism, psychology, and statistics. These studies span from 'close reading' and textual analysis, to detailed studies of reader backgrounds; from oral reports to written protocols; from introspection (think-aloud) to retrospection studies, literary analyses by experts, developments of questionnaires which have been tested in supervised completions by individual readers and groups of readers before the final data collections. These studies were begun in 1965, and institutionalised when we received grants as of 1968. Since then, we have had ongoing experimental studies of reader response at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

History

'Folktale' started in 1982. It was to span several cultures and it was to use literature which evoked a wide spectrum of reader responses. It went through many stages (which are described in detail in the papers

listed at the end of this report). In addition, there have already been spin-offs in articles, which are listed separately.

We chose authentic folk narratives from three different cultures. We discussed numerous narratives (from three cultures) which experts assured us were authentic. From these stories, we picked a few (three to five) from each culture. These stories were translated into Danish by a team member, and then some 20-40 students wrote reports on each story. These responses were analysed and listed to identify the one story from each culture which drew the broadest response.

The three stories selected in this way were now translated into English and (once more) into Danish, but this time by a team of translators, linguists, and ourselves. This was done in order to assure, if not identity between the texts, at least approximations where we were fully cognizant of the semantic and stylistic deviations between the two language versions. These texts were revised by native speakers of Danish and English, collated and finalized for the study.

Then 8 Danish, 3 Greenlandic and 10 English-speaking readers read the stories and reported in the course of their reading.

The stories were also sent to Danish, Greenlandic, Indian, Nigerian, and British schools and universities where students responded in writing.

These responses were listed.

They were then used for developing a comprehensive questionnaire on the response of each story.

The Danish and the English versions of the questionnaire were developed simultaneously and collated by translators to ensure that they were as approximate ('identical') as possible.

The set-up with tales and questionnaires in Danish as well as in English was then tested out, first with individual readers and then with classes under field conditions in Denmark. It was revised after each test round.

The final set-up included additional questionnaires on student backgrounds and attitudes. It was similarly tested out under field

conditions.

The final data collection started in early 1990 in India. Later the same year, it took place in the US and Ireland. It took place in Denmark in 1993

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND PRAGMATIC DECISIONS

Basic assumptions

Our basic assumptions in terms of principles, theory if you like, were the following:

1. The response to literary texts can indeed be compared meaningfully cross-culturally.

2. This response can be divided into different (albeit overlapping) components:

- those referring primarily to the reader's personality (individuality)
- those referring primarily to the reader's culture (in the broadest sense of the word, including religion, education, financial status, etc)
- and those which are cross-cultural ('universal').

These components are actually indivisible in the individual response, and in all likelihood, the individual readers will be aware only of few 'objective' factors which influence their response. The complexity poses numerous problems for the research(cf. Paper 13, pp. 5-15). They also pose a host of practical problems which must be solved in pragmatic decision-making in order to carry a project through to a successful end.

In the following pages we shall discuss, first the pragmatic decisions, and then deal with the questions raised in terms of theory with special emphasis on the prescriptive (heuristic) implications for cross-cultural research in general.

Pragmatic decisions

In order to conduct the study with the resources at our disposal and within a reasonable time limit (ten years, to be exact), we had to make

the following sleights-of-hands (which also entailed assumptions) at each stage in the project.

The choice of material

1. We chose to work with the subgroup of literature known as folktales.

This choice was determined by the following factors.

1.a They are narratives with action.

1.b They are in prose.

1.c They are (usually) fairly simple (in terms of language, style, plot, etc.)

1.d As a loosely-defined oral genre, they exist globally and have done so before written literature. As an oral genre, tales still exist today in many societies. If any genre should hold the key to 'universality' and universal appeal as literature, it must be the folktale.

1.e Unlike "literature", folktales are not tied up with a specific elitish social layer in the societies where they are told.

1.f It is recognised that folktales adapt to time and place in what is usually considered a 'collective narrative tradition'. In our context, this 'malleability' was particularly relevant in so far as the tales were translated for use in the project; accordingly, we could change the source text so that its contents would conform with the target text.

1.f.1. The 'malleability' also solves the 'droit morale' problem inherent in much translation work.

1.f.2. Also: the stories are considered common property, so there is no copyright problem.

The length of the stories

2. We decided that the tales must have a length of no more than 3,000 words, preferably less, so that the whole study of readers' responses could be carried out in two hours or less.

Cultural imprint in the material

3.a We chose to operate with three narratives.

3.b They were to be from three different cultures.

3.c We chose to limit ourselves to narratives recorded or accepted by recognised authorities on folkloristic material in the cultures involved.

3.d We assumed that, by accepting such (approximations to) authentic tales,,we would make sure that the tales would carry some underlying imprint of the culture from which they were recorded.

3.d We assumed that by selecting tales told by narrators who were recognised as good story-tellers in their respective cultures, we would get stories which were also 'good' in their 'original' cultures.

For these reasons, we selected tales from Denmark (largely Christian/ Northern European), from Turkey (largely Islamic/ Middle East), and from Greenland (Artic shamanism/Inuit)).

Decisions about language

4.a We chose to operate with two languages only, namely Danish and English.

4.b In so doing we could cover more than one culture in each language (It is generally known that English is used as the language of education/administration/second language in countries where it is not an indigenous language; Danish is used in a similar fashion in Greenland).

4.c We operated on the premise that, provided we took extreme care, we could set up stories which were, by and large, semantically identical in Danish and in English.

Preparatory studies and Danish students vs the main student body

5.a We had to assume that in order to identify the specific tales which were to be used for the intensive data collection, we could use the responses of Danish high-school pupils as a yardstick. In so doing, we did of course, not pay heed to their evaluations of the stories, only to the breadth and depth of the responses.

5.b We assumed that once the three stories had been identified, we got a fair coverage of responses by

5.b1. think-aloud protocols with 10 Danish-speaking and 10 English-speaking readers of all stories.[1]

5.b2. written protocols of each story by at least 30 readers from each one of the following countries: Denmark, Great Britain, Nigeria, and India. In Greenland, it was possible only to get 8-10 readers of each story.

5.c We had to assume that the responses of these readers were representative of cultural differentiations, even though the study must out of necessity be limited to fairly educated groups who knew English or Danish well enough to respond to the stories.

Qualitative data used for subsequent quantitative data collection

6.a We assumed that provided we took into account as many of these written responses as feasible, we would cover a tolerable part of reader responses globally to the tales.

6.b We assumed that, as in the case of the tale texts, we could set up questions in both Danish and English which were so close approximations to one another that they would allow for cross-cultural comparison.

6.c We assumed that by checking and retesting questionnaires (on the responses) in Denmark under field conditions, we would get a picture of what might happen under field conditions elsewhere, and also get an idea

[1] In other publications, we have kept strictly to the '+5'-rule which states that once the person responsible for the study feels the results are getting repetitive, the study may be closed if 5 additional reports add nothing new . We chose to dispense with it here because there were practical (financial) problems in making the interviews (they were conducted by assistants to avoid any kind of 'power' structure), and because we (correctly, it turned out) would get the wider response in the written protocols which were made by readers from cultures where we could not conduct think-aloud studies.

of what questions we should omit.

6.d We assumed that by checking and retesting questionnaires on the readers' backgrounds in Great Britain, Denmark, India, and Nigeria, we could pose questions which would yield answers which could be compared cross-nationally.

6.e In order to make sure that the number of parametres would not be too numerous, we decided to conduct the study in various countries with readers whose educational background and age seemed to be comparable cross-nationally.

The main data collection

In order to make sure that procedures at the main data collection were as uniform as possible internationally, one team member was always present when classes participated in the study.

Collection of data took place in 1991 in India, in the US, and in Ireland. The main data collection in Denmark was conducted by Peter Florentsen in 1993. The table on the opposite page indicates the precise number of questionnaires collected.

The data collected

Questionnaires collected in Bangalore (India): 205

Questionnaires collected in Iowa City (USA): 126

Questionnaires collected in Dublin (Ireland): 199

Questionnaires collected in Copenhagen (Denmark): in English: 231

Questionnaires collected in Copenhagen (Denmark): in Danish: 215.

Both English and Danish are represented in Danish readings in order to make it possible to gauge the influence of the use of a foreign language in the literature used and the questionnaires employed.

The degree of completion

Within the given time limit (in practice c. 80 minutes and not two hours as planned), not åll readers could complete the questionnaires. The numbers given on the opposite page refer to the Danish groups (which had the least time). They illustrate that our use of rotation in the design was extremely useful. In the data-collection, readers were requested to jump to page 33 if they had not reached this far when 15 minutes were left. In this way we were sure they provided us with vital information about age, gender, etc. which we have previously found crucial parameters in the response to literature.

Data processing

Subsequent pages list information about the status of the project and shows the initial pages of the key for the codification of questionnaires for data processing.

Data indsamlet: 231 spørgeskemaer engelsk version
215 ---------- dansk version

446 udfyldte spørgeskemaer ialt

Dataindsamlingsteder: Christianshavns Gymnasium
Falkonergården Gymnasium
Frederiksberg Gymnasium
Gl. Hellerup Gymnasium
Metropolitanskolen
N. Zahles Gymnasieskole
Østre Borgerdyd Gymnasium
Rysensteen Gymnasium
Vestre Borgerdyd Gymnasium
Sankt Annæ Gymnasium
Nørre Gymnasium

Udfyldningsgrad (Absolutte tal):

	Litterære del Antal historier			Kulturel baggrund	Psyko-logisk test	Total-besva-relse
	1	2	3			
Danske spørge-skemaer	8	37	170	212	198	159
Engelske spørge-skemaer	41	111	79	215	112	61

Udfyldningsgrad (Procent):

	Litterære del Antal historier			Kulturel baggrund	Psyko-logisk test	Total-besva-relse
	1	2	3			
Danske spørge-skemaer	4	17	79	99	92	74
Engelske spørge-skemaer	18	48	34	93	48	26

NB!: Det skal understreges at tallene udtrykker graden af fuldstændig besvarelse af de nævnte spørgeskemasektioner.

THE FOLKTALE RESEARCH PROJECT:
Preliminary examination of data

Task		In progress	Accomplished
Restoration of questionnaire on file	Danish version		X
	English version		X
Key to the codification of questionaires for dataprocessing in SPSS	Numeric answer codes		X
	Alphanumeric variable codes		X
Definition of questionnaire in the form of datafields for entering data readable by SPSS (in programme provided by H. Prebensen)		X	
Entering of data from 40 questionnaires into datafile			
Making a statistical survey of the data in SPSS			
Determination of answers to be correlated			
The writing of procedures for correlating data in the language of SPSS			
Carrying out of the above mentioned procedures			
Analysis of statistical results			

CULTURAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1	Choice:	Age
	Code:	Age
	5. Age	[*age*]

2	Choice:	Male	Female
	Code:	1	2
	6. Sex		[*sex*]

3.a	Choice:	Danish	Irish	American	Indian	Other nationality
	Code:	1	2	3	4	5
	7. Nationality					[*nation*]

3.b	Choice:	Yes	No	Yes, which
	Code:	1	2	3
	8. Previous citizen of another country?			[*ocitizen*]

	Choice:	Yes	No	Don't know
	Code:	1	2	3
4.a	9. Father born in this country?			[*faborn*]
4.b	10. Mother born in this country?			[*moborn*]

	Choice:	Europe	North America	South America	Africa	Middle East	India	East Asia	Australia/Oceania
	Code:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4.a	11. If no, please write where?								[*ofaborn*]
4.b	12. If no, please write where?								[*omoborn*]

5.a	Choice:	None	Protestantism	Catholicism	Other Christian denomination	Hinduism	Buddhism	Islam	Other
	Code:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	13. Religion/creed								[*religion*]

	Choice:	Father's/Mother's occupation	Don't know
	Code:	1	2
11	24. Father's occupation?		[*faocc*]
12	25. Mothers occupation?		[*moocc*]

	Choice:	Much above average	Somewhat above average	Average	Somewhat below average	Much below average
	Code:	1	2	3	4	5
13	26. Parents' present economic position					[*parepos*]
14	27. Own economic position?					[*ownepos*]

15.a	Choice:	Yes	No
	Code:	1	2
	28. Are you a single child? [*singlec*]		

15.b	Choice:	The eldest	The youngest	In between
	Code:	1	2	3
	29. Age relation to brothers and sisters?			[*agerel*]

16.a	Choice:	Danish.	English	Hindi	Other
	Code:	1	2	3	4
	30. Mother tongue?				[*mtongue*]

16.b	Choice:	Well	Fairly	Poorly
	Code:	1	2	3
	How well do you read other languages?			
	31. English			[*english*]
	32. German			[*german*]
	33. French			[*french*]
	34. Spanish			[*spanish*]
	35. Italian			[*italian*]
	36. Hindi			[*hindi*]

The present report is the last one published in this format for the 'Folktale study'. Subsequent publication will be in the form of articles in journals, and, we hope, books. They will not necessarily supersede information from our reports.

For the sake of completeness, we therefore list the publications in collections and in journals as well as in reports published by us and subsequently handed over to the ERIC-system.

ARTICLES IN JOURNALS, SURVEYS

Dollerup, Cay & Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. "En redegørelse for oversættelser og oversættelsesproblemer ved læseres oplevelser af 'samme tekster' på forskellige sprog." In Ole Togeby (Ed). *Papers from the eighth Scandinavian conference of linguists*. Copenhagen 1985, 390-406.

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Dollerup, Cay & Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. *Background and preliminary plans for the project*. Folktale: Paper 1. 1985. ERIC/Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1988. ED 295 138, 24pp.

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& Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. *The procedures for establishing the 'same', defintive versions in Danish and in English of a Danish, a Greenlandic, and a Turkish story in the "Folktale-project."* Folktale: Paper 4. 1987. ERIC/Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1988. ED. 295 141, 60pp.

& Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. *The construction and experimental testing of the first version of the questionnaire on the readers' backgrounds in the 'Folktale-project'.* Folktale: Paper 5. 1987. ERIC/Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1988. ED 295 146, 64pp.

(Ed). *The complete texts of the stories used in the 'Folktale-project'.* Folktale: Paper 6. 1988. ERIC/Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1988. ED 295 143, 64 pp.

& Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. *A listing of edited statements made by readers during the reading of the three stories in the 'Folktale-project'.* Folktale: Paper 7. 1988. ERIC/Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1988. ED 295 144, 58pp.

& Malene Grue & Vivian Lindhardsen & Signe M. Nielsen & Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen & Lene Schøtt-Kristensen. *Edited reader responses to the Danish narrative, 'Per Smed's Whip' from readers in Denmark, Greenland, Great Britain, India, and Nigeria.* Folktale: Paper 8. 1989. ERIC/ Educational Resources Information Center. Bloomington 1989. ED 301 858, 36pp.

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& Iven Reventlow & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. *Preparations for charting reader responses in the "Folktale-project".* Folktale: Paper 13. 1989. 60pp.

& Iven Reventlwo & Carsten Rosenberg Hansen. The Construction (summary) and the collection (Last progress report on the Folktale-project. Folktale: Paper 14. 1995. 16 pp.

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